

**Political History Collection  
Interview H.0001.09 : Tape 9**

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**Interviewed by:** Paljor Tsarong  
**Name:** Drakten [Tib. grags bstan]  
**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** 57  
**Date of Birth:** 1935

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## **Abstract**

Drakten [Tib. grags bstan] was a monk official in the traditional Tibetan government who discusses in detail the political events that occurred in Lhasa in the 1950s. In this interview, he discusses the 17-Point Agreement and early negotiations between China and Tibet. He talks about the political maneuvering of the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama, specifically at the Potala Palace. Finally, he details the inflation that occurred after the arrival of the Chinese.

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## **Tape 9**

**Q:** Now regarding the words, "The local government [Tib. sa gnas srid gzhung]," was there any discussion about that? Later there was a separation of Chamdo, Shigatse, and the local government. Was this written in the 17-Point Agreement, and later on what did people say about this?

**A:** In the 17-Point Agreement, not only the words "local government," but also the statement that they were going to start the Military Administrative Committee or Magsi Uyön Lhengang. This was to say that they were going to set up a governmental authority [Tib. gzhung 'dzin], all of this was already in the framework of the 17-Point Agreement and it was their desire. So the question of accepting these did not arise. However, the situation was an emergency where the Chinese were fully armed and ready. Under the Commander-in-Chief Fan Siling [Fan Ming], there were exactly 7,000 soldiers who came up to Khyungpo Tengchen and then circled down to Chamdo. The soldiers who first came up to Lhasa were the soldiers of Fan Siling. The number of soldiers was told to me by Kungö Liushar since they had requested the Kashag that they wanted grains to be supplied to these soldiers. From Chamdo via the main route, the main military strength was under the Commander-in-Chief Wang Siling [Wang Qimeil]. The army that he brought was said to be the 18th Army [Ch. shi ba jun; Tib. dmag sde ang bco brgyad pa]. You know, they posted large armies to the east, west and south. Among them, this was said to be the one that had full command of the western region. Wang Siling came from this group. The number of soldiers that he brought to Chamdo, I have not found out as [of] yet. The one that came via the northern route was the smaller one under Fan Siling with 7,000 soldiers. The one that came via Chamdo, under Wang Siling. The word "Wang" - now it is said that under a wang there are 100,000 soldiers (one bum). [TN note: Wang is a surname, not a unit of 100,000].

I don't know if this holds true, but this is what is widely said. Anyway, this was the larger one. Such numbers were sent to Tibet. Via the northern route they circled via Jara Pembar [Tib. lcags ra dpal 'bar], and from Chamdo, Wang Siling's soldiers had the main route in hand. While Ngabö was talking, they had ordered the soldiers to remain in their positions. They could not go forward and they were not allowed to rob things on the way. Then they said, "Are you going to place your seals on the Agreement or not? And if not, then we have no difficulty in ordering our soldiers to pull the trigger and go forward." So they were saying don't talk too much. At that time there was no way one could disagree on a few words. So they had to make some agreement. If we had defenses prepared one after another, then there was cause to use strong words. But we had nothing. It was empty all the way to Ngari. Since that was all the power one had, no matter what words were used, one had to use the seal. Yes, the words Local Government were there, but nothing. More than that, they said that they were going to start the Magsi Uyön Lhengang, that the Tibetan Army would become part of the PLA. These were already written into the Agreement, not letting us make any moves on it.

So what tactics did Ngabö and the others come out with? They said that the Chinese had already written everything down in a 10 point program. Regarding this, Kungö Gusung Depön had things to say. So Ngabö and the others, realizing that externally all was lost, tried their best to hold on to as much internal political power as possible for 9 years, whether it be regarding continuing the power and status of the Dalai Lama, no changes to the native customs and habits, the protection of the monasteries and not

affecting the monastic estates, or the religious freedom. So Ngabö and the others put [forth] these new statements, and as far as the words that the Chinese had already put into the framework, since their power was such, nothing could be done. Basically, that's what happened.

Now, the words local government; For example, the Chinese said that Tibet was part of China. What Ngabö said was that the negotiations could take place at Chamdo, at Jara Pembar or Lhasa. This is what he requested when he first met Wang Siling. But then one had to do whatever they wanted, right? The reason why they took them straight to Beijing was that when it was concerned with two countries, they came up and did the negotiations in Beijing. I think they also considered this as something having importance. Once they had their soldiers in, they knew we did not have anything, and so they just used force and took them for negotiations to Beijing. This would show that we were part of China, and I think they did consider this as also having some importance. We were also thinking alike and suggested various places in Tibet, but it was a situation where they did not consider this at all. If we were really part of China, then it would be obvious that we would have negotiated at Beijing. Anyway, Ngabö and the others were trying to get as much internal power as possible since externally it was lost. The idea was, for the time being, to calm things down and leave some kind of agreement so that we were not totally overcome. We had no defenses at all, and if they came straight through and ate up everything, then there was nothing to talk about. This was how Ngabö thought.

The words local government suggest that it is part of China but locally autonomous. This was the tactic of the Chinese. This word (local) is something that was written after the place was put under the gun. To call the country Tibet local government, even in the old books on China, is something that is probably an impossibility. Even in our country we say the Tibetan government [Tib. bod gzhung dga' ldan pho brang phyogs las rnam rgyal], never local government. No matter what books you look at, this is a word that was coined in 1951, that no pre-1951 books ever had. Regarding this, the Dalai Lama had also made it clear and even Ngawang Thöndrub and all were saying it clearly. The word PRC [Ch. zhong guo] was first used by the communists and China itself uses the word Jyongyang. I think "zhong" is considered the central and "guo" is regarded as a small nation [Tib. rgyal phran], and it was regarded as the central and the other regions [Tib. phyogs mtha']. So they changed the name of their country into "zhong guo." They included Tibet and others in the word country [Ch. guo jia]. The original name of China probably never had Tibet in it. So it's something newly created by the Communists. Likewise, in the Chinese Communist currency, the new Renminbi has Tibetan words in it.

Previous to this, at the time of the emperors, though I have not seen it, that was just not possible. What the communists did was to use their military power in full scale, and without consideration of the truth, they just made us to seal [approve] the agreement. It's just as they are saying right now. They say, "Don't talk about independence." Such statements are beyond the international law. It is just coming from sheer power. If one does not have anything to say, then that's it. But if one has something to say, then one should listen. If Tibetans want to talk about independence, let them talk, but show through evidence that Tibet is not independent and then one must decide. But they don't let you reply [with] even one word and just give the command, "Don't talk about independence." So this communist regime, their talk is only based on the power of the gun, not on reason, even now. That's how the words local government came about. Therefore, because it was so unreasonable, even the very seal that was in one's pocket was not used and they had to make false ones. They were not even allowed to consult.

Most probably, Ngabö had not arrived from China when Zhang Jingwu came via India. Ngabö and Lukhangwa never met or talked. The moment the Chinese came to shake hands and said, "Good, good [Ch. hao hao]," Lukhangwa said, "Yes, yes. Please hold on, please hold on. Regarding these, we have much to talk about." It began right there! The Chinese could never meet the standards of any country in the world and just gave the commands by sheer force. It was never a situation where they did things according to justice, even now.

Now, regarding Chamdo and Shigatse, at first it seemed that there may be a separation, but when the PCTAR started, both areas as well as Ngari were all included in the PCTAR. Committee members were selected from all three. Earlier, during our country's time, there were Changji, Lhoji and Doji. So Chamdo and Shigatse were areas for a governor [Tib. spyi khyab], and it was not a small government or anything like that. So the TAR included all of these areas. Whether it was considered from this or that side of the Yangtse River, or from Chamdo upwards, they were all part of one autonomous region. Regarding Shigatse, in the 17-Point Agreement it was said that the relations between our government and Tashilhunpo will be according to the time when there were good relations between the 9th Panchen Lama and the 13th Dalai Lama. But what the Chinese were trying to do was to make their status equal. Whatever the Chinese said, immediately after the name of the Dalai Lama was used, they had to add the name of the Panchen Lama. That was their policy. It was always, "Dalai Lama, Panchen Ertini [Mong. er ti ni], Dalai Lama, Panchen Ertini." The way the Panchen Lama began, there was a small monastery in the Tsang area. He was the lama of this small monastery, it was not a large monastery. During the time of the 1st Dalai Lama, Gendün Druba [Tib. dge 'dun grub pa], this lama was very well educated, and the Dalai Lama must have received some teachings from him and must have given [him] some title or so. Tashilhunpo Monastery was first started by Gyelwa Gendün Druba and then he went to Drepung. During this time, a representative, or an acting lama in charge, tritsab [Tib. khri tshab], was needed. The name of the monastery, I still can't remember. So the Panchen Lama was left as the tritsab. At that time he was not a Panchen, but he was the one before the Panchen line began. This lama who was brought from another monastery and kept as the tritshab. After his death, a reincarnation was found and named Panchen. This lama, I think he may be the 1st Panchen Lama, anyway, among the Panchen line, this Panchen, Lobsang Chögyen [Tib. blo bzang chos rgyan], seems to have been just extremely learned and incomparable. And there are many of Panchen Lobsang Chögyen's complete literary works [Tib. gsung 'bum] on all aspects of the Gelugpa tradition. I don't know which Dalai Lama it was at that time, but he became the root guru [Tib. dbu bla], or the tutor [Tib. yongs 'dzin], and so because of this, Tashilhunpo was given to him by the government. The whole labrang was handed over for this reason. The various estates of Tashilhunpo were something given during the time of the Dalai Lamas', and were not something that existed from the time of the early dharma kings. And as a lama there was no precedence to have power in Tibet like the Dalai Lama's. In Tibet, there are many labrangs and his status was that of a labrang, a large one. For example, today we have Trijang Labrang and Ling Labrang. Earlier they were just small labrangs. But since they became the Dalai Lama's tutors they are now big labrangs. So since this new Dalai Lama, Trijang and Ling Labrang have become more famous. Like that, it's something done by the government. Take for example, E Lhagyari [Tib. e lha rgya ri]. They are descendants of Songtsen Gambo [Tib. srong btsan sgam

po] and I don't think there was any break in the line. Unlike Tashilhunpo, they are much earlier and are really sort of Yabshi of the earlier kings. But he is only considered a high status of kudrak [Tib. sde dpon che khag]. Likewise, each of the Dalai Lamas will have a tutor and if every tutor had to be made equal to the Dalai Lama, then we would not be able to function in Tibet. From the religious side, there are Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü and Gelugpa- four Buddhist sects. The owner/holder of Buddhism is the Buddha Shakya Thupa [Tib. sha kya thub pa]. All of the dharma lineages were preached by the Buddha Shakya Thupa and were not given by some other Buddha, and there weren't any internal divisions. If we take the example of Sera Monastery, it has many tratsang like, Sera Jey, Sera Mey, Ngagpa, Gomang, Loseling and Deyang. So it was like that. The Dalai Lama is the representative [Tib. rgyal tshab] of the Buddha and also the owner of all of Buddhism, and this was written as [Tib. rgyal btsan yongs kyi bdag po]. That's why his name is the only one. If you consider from the Tibetan political side, he is the owner of the religion and politics [Tib. chos srid gnyis kyi don gyi bdag po]. So he was the owner of both the political and religious, and the whole territory and the people of Tibet. The Dalai Lama is the only one. From one perspective, this power is something given to him by the people. Secondly, there were many prophecies from Shakya Thupa declaring that the Dalai Lama is the owner of snow-land Tibet, and also the deity who has the obligation to liberate the sentient beings of Tibet [Tib. bod gangs can gyi lha skal]. So Buddha made numerous prophecies in the Kangyur and Tanjur. That's how it is with the Dalai Lama.

Now, if we consider the four religious sects, Sakya is led by Sakya Gongma. Among the Kagyü there is Trugpa [Tib. 'brug pa], Drigung, Karmapa. In the Nyingma, there is what is called the Mindröling, Dorjedra [Tib. rdo rje brag] and another. In the Gelugpa, Je Lama [Tsongkapa] started the faith. His representative is called as the full name, Jamgön Gyewai Gyeltsab Ganden Tri Rimpoché [Tib. 'jam mgon rgyal ba'i rgyal tshab dga' ldan khri rin po che]. So just as the Dalai Lama is the representative of Shakya Thupa, Ganden Tri Rimpoché is the representative of the Gelugpa. So, the Panchen Lama doesn't even come into this. Forget about sitting on the same level as the Dalai Lama, but from the religious side, he should even be sitting below the Ganden Tripa. At present, his high status, to put it in a nutshell, the various Panchens were allying [Tib. sbyar] themselves with China. When the Panchen Lama passed away, Ngabö gave a speech which clearly showed how the various Panchens had allied themselves with China. He most clearly brought that out. So it was a situation of allying with China to get as much power in Tibet. In reality, when one relates the whole story, the Panchen Lama is Gelugpa and the head of the Gelugpa faith is Ganden Tripa. But the Dalai Lama is more than Ganden Tripa or Sakya Gongma. He is the representative of Buddha Shakya Thupa. He has become the "owner" of all four religious sects.

The previous Panchen Lama went down to China and stuck to Chang Kaishek. Chang wrote to the 13th Dalai Lama regarding this. He asked what the situation was regarding the Panchen Lama and what he was thinking regarding the extent of his power. This was sometime when the Dalai Lama was 56-57 years old. He passed away at age 58. The letter from Ch1ang had 8 points. In the reply to the 8 points, he said, "Regarding the Panchen Lama, he first went to India and started relations with the British. The British did not recognize and look after him [Tib. ngos len bdag sprod]. Then he returned, and through Kharka Jetsun Dampa [Tib. khal kha rje btsun dam pa], he made contact with the White Russians. Isn't [this] it? They did [a] guarantee, and with the help of Kharka, he planned to come to Russia and leave." Since it was a long journey, when he reached Xining, the Red Russians won power from the White Russians. They were not permitted to find the reincarnation of Kharka Jetsun Dampa, the monasteries were destroyed, the monks became soldiers and the estates were confiscated. That was the situation when the Panchen Lama arrived there. So it was not possible to go to Russia, and from there [he] talked with Chiang and went to China. So the letter said, "That's how he has come there, right? This behavior of allying himself with various countries, and when one is not possible, then trying another and so on, so what is the reason for this? Unless I would receive a report asking for an apology, no answer can be given as to whether the Panchen Lama can or cannot return. Please send us the reasons why he had to do that, and then we will think about it." In the letter this was clearly written. But the Chinese came up with the Panchen Lama. So in order to influence and interfere [with] the internal affairs of Tibet, the Chinese policy was to always support the Panchen Lama. This is the reason and there is absolutely no precedence for the Panchen Lama to come even close to the political rights of the Dalai Lama. Behind the Panchen Lama were the Chinese, and since the Chinese forced their way into Tibet, that was the reason for the high status of the Panchen. In the PCTAR, Chamdo, Shigatse and Ngari representatives were there. Even now it is called Shigatse Prefecture [Ch. zhuan qu] and is an area for one governor.

**Q:** When the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama met, regarding this, there seems to be a lot of talk as to whether the Panchen Lama prostrated or not. Some say a film was made about this and did not show the Panchen Lama prostrating. There was talk about equal seating arrangements. How was it?

**A:** I was in Lhasa when the Panchen Lama came there. Regarding all of this talk, among the government officials, there was my uncle and Kungö Segshing [Tib. shar rtse lags], and when the fellow tsidrun all used to talk with each other after the Trungja, they did talk about things that took place. I was young at that time and had not entered government service, and I was sort of an attendant to my uncle. From the conversations that the kungös used to have, we heard that when the Panchen Lama came up, actually he had the name Panchen Lama, and he was very young but the actual power was in the hands of the two dzasa. We heard that the dzasa decided that this time they should try and command as much power as possible, and not try and do things according to the traditional protocol. What the two dzasa asked the government, in a nutshell, was that the thrones should be together with both facing towards the south. At the Potala, there is the house where the cushions were kept in the cushion house or denkhang [Tib. gdan khang], and the person who is appointed and in charge of this was the Tse Denyer [Tib. rtse gdan gnyer]. So the Kashag said, "The Denyer has the seating list [Tib. gdan deb] and whatever he is entitled to, that will obviously be arranged. To say that the seating has to be the same as the Dalai Lama is an impossibility." Since they were saying this strongly and the two dzasa were kind of trying to be obstinate [Tib. lta ba rang khyer], and the Chinese seemed to have given support to the dzasa, the government must have been inconvenienced and said that to this Panchen Lama, as a special gesture, they would make the seating arrangement like the regent. Usually, the Dalai Lama's seat is on the platform [Tib. sdings cha] and no matter how big the other lamas may be, their seats are always below the platform facing in various directions. Now, when there is a regent and when the Dalai Lama is young and has not taken over the reigns of the government, the regent's seat is on the platform facing east, while the Dalai Lama's seat is facing south. The regents seat is slightly lower than the Dalai Lama's. So like this, they said that they would put the [Panchen Lama's] seat there. Externally, the Chinese are one thing, but internally it would be shameful and ugly for us to show the Chinese how internally there were many problems. Just as in the 17-Point Agreement, they

did the concession [Tib. ngo srung] and gave special treatment when there was no entitlement. And the procession was so elaborately arranged and the stack of fried cookies or kartro [Tib. dkar spro], which was well decked. At the big hall or Tsomchen [Tib. tshom chen], the quantity of cookies decked is enough to fill about 4 rooms. The height is about 1 story.

**Q:** So the kartro is from the government side?

**A:** Yes, the government. One needed many dried yak carcasses. The yaks were just skinned from head to tail and dried. Likewise, many dried sheep and goat carcasses. The whole shape of the animal was left as is. In the front, there were about 15-20 tables and all the sweets and dried fruits were arranged, like kinds of white sweets, Jeri Boka [Tib. bye ril bo dkar], rock sugar, Shekara Tasoma [Tib. shel ka ra rta so ma], bowl shaped molded sugar, Shekara Tingba [Tib. shel ka ra ting par], apricots, Ngarkham [Tib. mngar khams], red dates, Chibikha [Tib. ch bi kha]. In the middle was sugar molded into high stacks. There were many like that, and with these arranged in the middle, the ceremony took place. After the celebration was over, some of the fruits were distributed. There is a saying which says, "The ones seated above, like kalön and dzasa who are dressed in yellow, they sit facing the sweets. The nangma khenche and the khenjung sit facing the dishes of apricots and mango. The common lay officials and tsidrung sit facing the lousy quality Tibetan peaches [Tib. ri kham] [Tib. ser ril dang bye ril kha sprod red/ a mra dang nang ma kha sprod red/ dkyus ma dang ri kham kha sprod red]." At the ceremonies the workers get a fried cookie called mukthung [Tib. smug thung] and everybody has a big white cloth which holds about 3-4 kgs .

**Q:** What is mukthung?

**A:** Cookies fried in butter. You know there is a photograph with Mao and the Dalai Lama seated together where the fried cookies are displayed? That's mukthung. Other than that I haven't seen any good pictures of mukthung.

It was an interesting sight to see when certain people were let loose to grab the cookies piled in the middle of the hall soon after the door of the hall was opened. Usually, the people would make their chupa pouch big and would run in and grab the cookies, and some would get on the backs of the people, and some would get underneath and grab the cookies like vultures grabbing to eat the corpses. Some mischievous people behind would take out the cookies from the chupa pouch of people in front of them by loosening their belt. So no matter how the person in the front would put the cookies in his pouch, his pouch would never become full because someone was taking them out from behind. So he would have to tie his belt again and grab the cookies. There were also cookies in the basket. Some would take a basket full and tell some officials to keep it, and go to get some more. But after he left, some other people who were standing near the wall would come and take away the basket. This was a very interesting show. If you leave the people like this, there would be a danger of some getting killed in the crowd. So the 4 simgag would stand there and whip them all the time to stop them rushing too much, but they would not care. In that ceremony, there were some lay officials wearing the ancient royal ornaments [Tib. rin rgyan]. So some young tsidrung like us were told to stand at the front of them to avoid [prevent] their ornaments from getting grabbed.

Anyway, the ceremony was so elaborate, but when (the Panchen Lama) came up, he did not come to the ceremony, saying if that was how the seating arrangement was going to be made, then he was not going. So it was said, "If he is not going to the ceremony, then that's it, but proceed with the ceremony. The ceremony was specially done for the Panchen and he said that he is not coming but will come to the Dalai Lama quarters." It was not possible to leave the Panchen Lama alone in the room and for the Dalai Lama to sit alone on his seat at the ceremony, so both the seats were left empty. What was there if he went to the Dalai lama's room? At the Dalai Lama quarters, the Dalai Lama would be seated in his seat placed in a wooden frame [Tib. zhug sgrom]. On this side a seat is arranged, and though the Panchen Lama cannot sit in the wooden frame, together there's not much difference in the height of the seats, right? This is how they met and at the ceremony the seats were left empty. When they [must be his uncle and other officials] returned they were very disappointed and said, "It is a bad omen. The day will come when the throne will be empty. What to do?" They said, "The way the Panchen Lama showed his character." All the government officials were very upset saying, "An ill omen was begun and the day will come when the throne will be empty." Anyway, such a large ceremony was arranged but when the actual ceremony began, both thrones were left empty. It was also during this time that the real sentiments of the Lhasans against the Panchen Lama grew.

But there was more to come. They said that they wanted, to be placed under Tsang, all of their aresa from the Gampala Pass onwards, even though earlier had given Shigatse many entitlements. However, when the government officials passed through using the horse corvée and the pack animals, even though land had been given [to the Panchen], one had to provide the corvée taxes for providing animals and transportation. They would carry it on their own land and when their area had ended, then they would unload it. Later, the government horse corvée and the pack animals on the land that belonged to Tashilhunpo was stopped, you know? There was a lot of antagonism between the government and labrang and to some extent it is because they over did it [Tib. tshod zin yod ma red]. After that, our transporters had to carry all the way passed their allotted stations. And the government miser on both sides had to carry right across the labrang area. So the miser had a lot of difficulties [Tib. brdab gsig].

**Q:** Was this stopped from the government side or did they say they didn't want to?

**A:** That's why I'm saying, they used the Chinese to lean on. They stopped it having no regard [Tib. ltos med] and not taking into account the times and the circumstances [Tib. gnas dus tshod rtsis]. It's all just like the seating business. They did not have even an inkling of entitlement. And, of course our officials were not going to listen to this at all. In this way, the government and labrang, when the situation was already bad, it got worse. What they were saying now is that the government did not recognize him and mistreated him. They don't comprehend the situation and just talked like that. The very clear internal situation was not at all understood externally. Just now, what I am saying about the entitlement order from the Bugdam edict, and when one really looks at these documents, then you realize that the Panchen Lama honestly took a very inappropriate action, really. [He] went over to the British and the idea was to bring some outside force inside. The same with the Russians, and then he went over to the GMD. And this is just within the lifetime of . Later, the difficulties in returning started from all of this.

Then when he came up, he said that he was going to come with a large body of soldiers. So the government said that if he wanted

to come up he could, but they would not allow soldiers to come. You know, I told you about the conversation I had with Kungö Namseling at Varanasi? In that conversation he also spoke of the previous Panchen Lama. Kungö said that he was the Riwoche Jadang Regiment's Depön. He said he received an (express) arrow letter [Tib. mda' yig], which is a letter written on satin and wrapped on a stick from the Panchen Lama, which stated all of the various places on their itinerary and all of the transportation arrangements that should be ready. A letter was sent and when it arrived in one area, it was received at various postal stations and sent onwards. The letter was written on a yellow satin with a round dragon design [Tib. mdzod gos]. In the text there was the phrase, "Holder of religion of all the Western Region [Tib. nub phyogs yongs kyi bstan pa'i bdag po]." So when Namseling read the text of the document he thought, "What do you mean by the 'Holder of religion of all the Western Region?' In whatever religious text one looks at, one never finds such a title. And also saying that he is going to bring soldiers with him." Namseling, of course, was a government official. So he was loyal to his government and he said that he made a pledge to himself that if they came with soldiers, he would not allow them to take even one step. "The Panchen Lama is a lama and so there is no place for me to go except to hell. But, I have decided that they will not walk one step on this territory." Later, when it was said that the Panchen Lama was coming, Kungö told me that he had this spear or Tendung [Tib. rten mdung] of Nechung Deity. This Tendung, without anyone shaking it, it rattled and moved. So he thought that this really must be it [the Panchen Lama's arrival] and still he remained that way. Then [the Panchen Lama] did not come, since he heard that he passed away down there.

**Q:** What is Tendung?

**A:** A spear. So there were a lot of soldiers, but the government order was that no soldiers would be allowed, but he could come in any other way he wished. But he could not come. Though I have not been to see it, it is said that in the chamber of the Panchen Lama there is a wall painting. The subject of the painting was the previous Panchen Lama coming up. To the east of Shigatse, I believe there is a large bridge called the East Bridge [Tib. zam pa shar]. On top of the bridge, the first rider was facing backwards. He had not crossed the bridge and no one was coming from behind. Anyway, it seemed that later he could not come to his seat.

**Q:** A while ago I spoke with Sawangchemmo Kungö Gyalola and he said that in 1951-52 he went to Lhasa. Now because he had spent a lot of time in China, he said that he told them that it was better to do the democratic reforms ourselves. Since is socialist there was no alternative except to go [on] the socialist path. In this way, at least from the miser side, there would not be uprisings and dissatisfactions reported to the government very much. During this time, it seemed that the government had thoughts about reforming, like nationalizing the dzong and the estates. How did this Legjö Legung (Reform Office) work and when did it start?

**A:** Regarding this, I don't know very much. However, at that time we were all in Tibet, and if I were to tell you what we heard about it, after Ngabö came up and gave a long lecture at the Tsidrun Lingka he said, "It would be very good if some reforms were done. If one had a hat or clothes, and if one had it custom made, then it would be very comfortable and well fitting. If you have to wear something that others have made, then whether it is comfortable or not, it's too late. So it is better to do some reforms. The situation of the miser is really a difficult one. These days it is very important to look into the affairs of the miser. And even the government officials, the landowners [Tib. sa cha'i bdag po], now it is better to sacrifice your lands. It is good to think a bit. The miser are poor. If we do the reforms then it will not only be good, but also comfortable. Though it is mentioned in the 17-Point Agreement, they will never leave it alone, they will definitely do it. If others cut the pattern, then there will be nothing left to say later." It is said that this is what Ngabö said. Now regarding this, the aristocrats and the monasteries were thinking that if the estates of the aristocrats were effected [Tib. do phog], the monastic income [Tib. mchod rgyun] would be effected and if the monastic income would be effected, the aristocrats' estates would also be effected. And they put forward similar opinions and they were stubborn [Tib. mkhregs po], and they regarded Ngabö also as having faults and having communist ideas. However, it was practice and it seems that they could not see that Ngabö's thoughts were deep and far-sighted. Everyone must have looked down [Tib. mthong chung] on him. Anyway, it is as you have said. Kungö Sawangchemmo [Gyalo] went to Tibet and at the Jora estate, which was a large estate that had a lot of outstanding loans. He asked them to bring all the papers, and the first thing he did was to tear them all up. And to the poor he distributed a lot of grain and stated that from this day on there would be no loans collected. So they said that at Jora, this is what he did. There were a lot of obligations that government Ministers (Tib. sawang) had, like getting horses ready for the riders at the Mönlam Festival, and full attire for many servants and saddlery, and also the best quality, and the regular ones. And in his house he got a lot of unnecessary things and even did a courtyard sale of his belongings. And like what Yabshi did, it is said that Ngabö also did it in Kongpo [reform on his estate]. But I did not hear about any details on this. At our quarters there was this person called Chandzö Lobsangla, and just as a curiosity, he had bought a beautiful fur that belonged to Ngabö. It was made all from rat fur and [was] very fine. He said it was so thin and smooth, so let the two of us take it apart and make garments out of it. One day we took apart this satin dressed fur and made a garment each using a surge lining. It was so smooth to the skin and wonderful to wear. He did a sale in his courtyard. Anyway, thinking that others may follow, he did that, but others did not follow suit.

Since things could not just be left like that, it was decided that the Reform of society (Jitso [Tib. spyi tshogs]) would form. What happened in this organization was that until now, all the dzong fields were recorded in the main book [Tib. 'bab deb] according to gang and dön. Now, this amount was collected and provided to the offices of the Tseja, Laja and Tsikhang as the yearly central tribute Ünbul [Tib. dbus 'bul] and military salary to be [given] by the local dzong [Tib. sa gnas] to the military regiments and monasteries according to the book. If there were still funds remaining, then the dzongpön kept [them] and this was their right or income. Since it was usually collected for 3-4 years, they got quite a lot, but it was embezzled saying that it ran out. It was like sharing the livelihood with the government. With the nationalization [Tib. gzhung 'dzin] under the Legjö, the two dzongpön together collected and left the amount in the grain storeroom. The two could not touch this individually. They had to find some other means for one's own finance. They got a permanent salary. If the dzong was at quite a distance, they were entitled to more servants. Each servant got anywhere around 70 odd khe of barley. The dzongpön got anywhere from 100-150-200 khe and probably each servant had 60-70 khe. For distant dzongs, there were more servants. Without that, one could not really manage. If one had to travel the long distances of the northern plains, you had to be armed and had to have companions with you. Even among the miser one could not manage since there were very difficult people [Tib. gyong po]. So if you collected the salary of a few people, then you could collect quite a lot. The salary was just enough to live quite a comfortable life. Generally, regarding the dzong and the estates, it is referred to as like putting everything in the vase [Tib. bum pa sib blug], and whatever was left over after meeting, the expenditure was given to the Legjö Legung. Whatever has to be given for military salary, it was done, and all other

expenditures had to be met. So when all the excess funds from all the dzong were collected, it was really a large fund and it was like having a whole new fund for which the government could use whenever they wanted. So there was butter, grains, and money from everywhere.

**Q:** After the funds were collected what was done with them? The old institutions like Tseja, Laja, already had allotted collection funds. This was a new one and so where?

**A:** There were a lot of new extra rituals [Tib. zhabs brtan 'phar ma], and so the Shabden Lhagang also got a lot. When there were a lot of big rituals that the Shabden Lhagang could not meet, they could ask the Legjō to do them. Even at Lhasa since the government officials also got a permanent salary, there was the Granary or Drukhang Legung [Tib. 'bru khang las khungs], instituted separately. Anyway, there were a lot of funds at the Legjō and I don't really know where they were spent or whether they just remained there. However, they did collect it and the storerooms were full.

**Q:** Who was working in the Legjō Legung?

**A:** It was headed by one sawang and it was Sawang Surkhang. Then there were the one tsipön and one trunyichemmo in the Standing Committee [Tib. rgyun las]. A more elaborate organization was 1 sawang and 8 trungtsi. Then there were representatives of the 3 great monasteries. And there were many tsidrung and lay officials as staff [Tib. las bya].

**Q:** Since you mentioned the Drukhang Legung, I remembered something. Sawang Surkhang worked in the Drukhang Legung, right?

**A:** No, it was not him. The Legjō Legung was Sawang Surkhang. It was located on top of Shingra in the Tsuglagang. The Drukhang Legung started in the new palace (Phodrang Sarpa [Tib. pho brang gsar pa]). Lhalu was in it, so was Kapshö [Tib. ka shod], Jensei Kumbela [Tib. spyen bsal kun 'phel lags], and Janglojen [Tib. lcang po can].

**Q:** When was this, in the 1950s?

**A:** Maybe around 1954 or so.

**Q:** Now, what I heard was Surkhang Sawangchemmo was working in the Drukhang Legung, and at that time he said that the army was to be joined with the PLA. Then later, petitions were made when the Dalai Lama went to Tsurphu and he said that everything would remain as it was. Have you heard that?

**A:** No, I have not heard that. Now the question of amalgamating the Tibetan Army into the PLA, the Chinese were very insistent on that. At first, the two sitsab blocked it and it remained that way.

**Q:** It is said that Sawang Surkhang spoke about not having the Tibetan Army, but later through a special petition it was to remain as before. The military also remained for quite sometime without a salary from the Drukhang Legung (Grain office). They said that even if they were not going to be paid they would serve and would never leave.

**A:** I see. Now regarding salary, there was already the Payroll Office or the Shöl Phokang for the military salary with two paymasters or phogpön [Tib. phogs dpon]. So there would not be any problems with the salary. When they first came, the Chamdo soldiers arms were collected and some soldiers were left, so there were some difficulties. Later when Magji Jangjenlogo was appointed, he made things more proper. Otherwise, the rupön and the gyagpön could keep 2 and 4 servants. I think depön could keep 4 or 6 servants. Later they didn't keep the servants and from the households who were obliged to send soldiers [Tib. khri khungs], and provide the military provision [Tib. dmag rgyags], they collected money in place of the soldiers [Tib. dmag dod], and this became the income of the rupön and the gyagpön. As for the miser, it looks like the soldiers were recruited, but the rupön and the gyagpön did not have any soldiers to show for that. So actually, the soldiers were missing from the real number of soldiers. After Magji Lodrö Kelsangla came, he made the number of soldiers complete [Tib. kha blangs]. The soldiers were fulfilled by actual persons. If one needed one or two servants, then actual soldiers were used for this. If that person needed to go for practicing drills or whatever, then all were there. So the soldiers were appointed by the actual person [Tib. ngo 'dzugs] and the idea of collecting money in place of the soldier by the rupön and gyagpön was done away with. And the soldiers who were not there because the military field or magang [Tib. mag rkang] had been scattered were also reinstituted again. So during Jangjenlogo's time, he organized it very well.

**Q:** After the Chinese came, the prices of food increased. I won't ask you about the People's Association since I have already asked others, but during this time, some say that there was danger of famine. Let me ask you about that and about where food in Lhasa was coming from and the amount of price increases. For example butter, grains and others.

**A:** Before the Chinese came, let me see, in the 1940s, I have heard about barley grain costing about 13, 14 per khe, and as high as 19 ngüsang. This was actually very high. In 1954-55, 1 khe of barley grain was 3 dotse. In 1956-57 it was 4 dotse and 35 ngüsang. So from about 20 ngüsang to over 200 ngüsang, then how much [of a] percent increase is that? Is it 200 percent?

**Q:** You mean from 20 to 200?

**A:** Yes, is it 10 percent or 100 percent.

**Q:** No, it is something like 1,000 percent. From 20 to 40, that is 100 percent increase. If you double 20 that's 100 percent. So 200 is 1,000 percent [Note: it is 900%].

**A:** Butter likewise. When they were saying that 1 khe of butter, which was 35 ngüsang was soon going to reach 40 ngüsang, later it went to 8 dotse, I think. Yes, 8 dotse. Meat and vegetables likewise. Earlier, I had even taken 1 sho to buy vegetables like radishes and cabbage. A bit later 1 could buy radish pickles, Sön Labhu [Ch. suan la phug] with 1 tranka. Later one bought

vegetables at 10 odd ngüsang. One piece of vegetable called Osün was 10 ngüsang, and 1 tomato was 8-9 ngüsang. Anyway, purchase items increased tremendously. Mainly, there was a great increase in the population. 7,000 soldiers had arrived, and likewise, a great number of cadres. Excluding the two, there were many [migrant] Chinese who just filled every nook and cranny. Then in 1956 and 57 there were so many Khambas and Amdos who arrived, and by then, Lhasa was highly populated. Let alone the question of living in houses, but on roofs and behind walls, they would make a canopy and make a place to stay. Even small business, like hair cutting shops, were established. Even in the courtyards, partitions were made and people lived there. So because of this increase in the population, food prices did not stabilize. Aside from this, the Chinese gave whatever was demanded of them. When the Chinese first came, the Lhasans liked them a lot. They used to call out saying, master, "Bombola, Bombola [Tib. dpon po lags]," and when we were around, the shop keepers would not pay attention to us and attended to the Chinese first. This was because, the Chinese never made any problems regarding price and they paid in dayang. Whatever was demanded, they paid. The dayang, since it was stabilized at 15 ngüsang, they could use it. On the other hand those who went to India were buying dayang at the rate of about 18 ngüsang, making a profit of 1-3 ngüsang. At one time, although only Tibetan currency was paid, and it was really up to the wishes of the trader, but when one asked for the price, they would give the quote in dayang. So instead of saying, like the old days; 1 dotse and 15 ngüsang, they would say 100 dayang, 15 dayang, et cetera. So since the Chinese used plenty of money to get things, the price never stabilized. Since the price increased so much and since everyone was complaining, a lot of the Chinese were sent down and it was also one reason why they wanted to send the Amdos and the Khambas home.

**Q:** When the soldiers first came, a lot of the others came. Was the government sending them up because there was work to be done since there were many Chinese, or did they just come up by themselves knowing the situation?

**A:** They probably just fled and came up on their own. They usually came on foot. They did not come in vehicles, though there could have been those who were known to the soldiers and who came in vehicles. But most were rag tag and came on foot.